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III.—PATRONS OF LETTERS IN NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK, c. 1450

II

Lydgate's *St. Edmund* was written between 1434 and 1439, probably nearer the former than the latter date.¹ Within a few years after 1439 we meet with the writings of Osbern Bokenham, a member of the house of Austin friars at Stoke Clare in the southwestern corner of Suffolk. Altho the two poets were attached by their sympathies to opposite political parties, Lydgate being a staunch Lancastrian and Bokenham an ardent Yorkist, the monk of Bury had no warmer admirer than the friar of Stoke Clare. We cannot be sure that they knew each other personally, but since they lived within less than twenty miles of each other and were both fond of society, it appears very probable. Not only does Bokenham allude again and again to Lydgate (usually coupling his name with those of Chaucer and Gower), but on one occasion he mentions a particular work of Lydgate's, the *Life of Our Lady*.²

Bokenham was born about 1393, perhaps in Lincolnshire.³ The saints' legends that have come down to us

¹ Lydgate's *St. Alban* was written in 1439 (*St. Alban und Amphabel*, ed. Horstmann, p. 195), at the request of Whethamsteade, abbot of St. Albans. As this commission was evidently an imitation of Curteis's, the year 1439 is a *terminus ad quem* for the *St. Edmund* (McCracken, *Studies*, etc.).

² Bokenham, *Legenden*, ed. Horstmann, *St. Anne*, l. 612.

³ The only evidence of his birthplace is his statement (*Leg.*, Pro., ll. 135 ff.) that near by where he was born was an old priory of Black Canons, in which was the foot of St. Margaret, by which many cures were wrought. Horstmann conjectures, on the basis of his

from his hand cannot claim a high rank as literature (tho they are by no means despicable), but are of much interest on account of the light they throw on Bokenham himself and his circle of friends. He had an uncommon power of attracting patronage, that is, of interesting people in the production of literature, and most of his legends were written for the use of some particular person.

In 1443 Bokenham began his legend of St. Margaret at the request of his friend Thomas Burgh. His first motive in writing the legend was to excite men's affections to love and serve this saint, but, he says:

Anothyr cause wych that meuyd me	175
To make thys legende, as ye shal se,	
Was the inportune and besy preyere	
Of oon whom I loue wyth herte entere	
Wych that hath a synguler deuocyyoun	
To thys virgyne, of pure affecccyyoun;	180
He me requyryd wyth humble entent—	
Whos request to me is a comaundement—	
That, yif I hym louyd, I wold it doo.	
I durst not hastily assente hym to,	
Weel knowyng myn owyn infyrmyte,	185
Tyl I had a whyle weel auysyd me;	
And thanne, the yeer of grace a thowsend treuly	

name, that he was born at Bokeham, now Bookham, Surrey, near which, at Reygate, there was a house of Austin Canons, (*Leg.*, p. v). But we do not know that the foot of St. Margaret was at this place, and the houses of the Austin Canons were so numerous that this detail is of no value as *corroboration*, but is merely a *condition* that must be fulfilled. The basis of my conjecture that Bokenham was born in Lincolnshire is the familiarity he shows (see passage quoted below, Pro. II. 215-222) with the vicinity of Burgh and Bolingbroke castle. These localities are, I believe, Old Bolingbroke, and Burgh Le Marsh and Burgh Station, near the coast of eastern Lincolnshire. The Austin Canons had a house at Markby, some 10 miles north of Burgh Station (Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, L. 1787, *sub loco*).

Foure hundryd and also thre and fourty,
 In the vighlye of the Natyuyte
 Of hyr that is gemme of virgynyte, 190
 The seuenete day euene of Septembre
 Whan I gan inwardly to remembre
 Hys request growndyd in pete,
 Me thowt it were ageyn cheryte
 Hys desyr lengere for to denye. 195
 And yet I sore feryd me of enuye,
 Wych is euere besy and eek diligent
 To deprauue priuily others trewe entent;
 Wherfore, hyr malyhs to represe,
 My name I wyl not here expresse, 200
 As toforn is seyd. wherfore I preye
 And requere eek, if I it dare seye,
 Yow, sone and fadyr, to whom I dyrecte
 This symple tretys: that ye detecte
 It in no wyse wher that vylany 205
 It myht haue, and pryncypally
 At hoom at Caunbrygge, in your hows,
 Where wyttys be manye ryht capcyows
 And subtyl, wych sone my lewydnesse
 Shuld aspye. wherfore, of ientylnesse, 210
 Kepyth it as cloos as ye best kan
 A lytyl whyle; and not-for-than
 If ye algate shul it owth lete go,
 Be not aknowe whom it comyth fro,
 But seyth, as ye doon vnderstand, 215
 It was you sent owt of Ageland
 From a frend of yourys that vsyth to selle
 Goode hors at feyrys & doth dwelle
 A lytyl fro the Castel of Bolyngbrok
 In a good town wher ye fyrst tok 220
 The name of Thomas, & clepyd is Borgh
 In al that cuntre euene thorgh & thorgh;
 And thus ye shul me weel excuse
 And make that men shul not muse
 To haue of me ony suspicyoun! ¹

At the conclusion of the ms. of the legend is the following note, written in two different hands:

¹ *Leg.*, Pro. ll. 175 ff.

Translatyd into englys be a doctor of dyuynite clepyd Osbern Bokenam [a suffolke man], frere austyn of the conuent of Stokclare [and was doon wrytyn in Canebryge by hys soñ frere Thomas Burgh: The yere of our lord a thousand foure hundryth seuyn & fourty: Whose expence dreu thretty schyligys; & yafe yt on-to this holy place of nunnys that þei shulde haue mynd on hym & of hys systyr Dame Betrice Burgh. of þe wych soulys Jhesu haue mercy Amen].¹

These two passages contain all that we know of Thomas Burgh. He was born at Burgh, in eastern Lincolnshire, and appears to have been at this period, 1443-1447, a member, perhaps the superior, of a house of friars at Cambridge. Thomas Burgh not only caused Bokenham to write the legend of St. Margaret, but collected or got from the poet all of his legends of women saints and had them copied, presenting the volume to a convent of nuns.² From the fact that Burgh and not Bokenham "published" the collection, and also from the fact that in so doing he disregarded Bokenham's request to keep his authorship a secret, Horstmann inferred that Bokenham died before 1347.³ The name of Burgh is so common that Thomas cannot (at least by the present writer) be connected with any particular family bearing that name.

Bokenham's legend of St. Anne was written for his friend Katherine Denston,⁴ and concludes with the lines:

Prouide, lady [i. e. St. Anne], eek, þat Jon Denstone,
& Kateryne his wyf, if it plese þe grace
Of god aboue, thorgh þi merytes a sone
Of her body mow haue, or they hens pace,

¹ *Leg.*, p. 267. The statement, added by the second hand, that Bokenham was a Suffolk man, is no evidence that he was *born* there.

² There was a convent of Benedictine nuns at Cambridge, near Greencroft (Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*).

³ *Leg.*, p. xiii.

⁴ *Leg.*, St. Anne, ll. 65 ff.

As they a dowghter han yung & fayre of face,
 Wyche is Anne clepyde in worshyp, lady, of þe,
 & aftyr to blysse eterne conuey hem alle thre!
 AMEN lorde, for charyte.¹

By means of the precise details given in this passage we are able to identify the persons named, for in the parish church of Melford, about eight miles east of Stoke Clare, is the inscription:

Pray for the soul of John Denston and for the happy state of Catherine his wife, daughter of . . . Clopton, Esq., and of Anne Broughton, daughter and heir of the aforesaid John and Katherine.²

And in 1475 Sir John Howard and John Broughton the younger, Denston's son-in-law, founded at Denston a perpetual chantry to celebrate divine service daily "for the good estate of the king and his consort Elizabeth, queen of England, and his firstborn son Edward, prince of Wales, duke of Cornwall and earl of Chester, and the said John Howard and John Broughton and Anne his consort and their heirs and for their souls after death and the souls of John Denston and Katharine his wife" and others.³

John Denston, who seems to have been born not later than 1413,⁴ was a person of considerable importance in

¹*Ibid.*, ll. 697 ff.

²*Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and Natural History*, vi, p. 405. This volume of the *Proceedings* also contains descriptions of the Denston Church and Denston Hall.

³See the licence for founding this chantry, dated 1 March, 1475, *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1467-1477, p. 484.

⁴See record of a pardon to Robert Atteford of Broghton, co. Huntingdon, "yoman," for not appearing to answer John Denston touching the detinue of a certain box with charters, etc., therein, before 16 April, 1434 (*ibid.*, 1429-1436, p. 314). This entry is marked "Suffolk" and probably refers to our John Denston. If so, John Denston was of age at that time. This record may possibly

the county of Suffolk, serving as coroner shortly before 17 March, 1441,¹ and being named in the commissions of the peace in the years 1461, 1462, and 1463.² There are many other references to him in contemporary documents, but what particularly interests us in the present study is the evidence of his connection with the group of literary patrons whom we found in northern Norfolk. We find that John Denston was commissioned in 1449, with Sir Miles Stapleton and others, to negotiate a loan to the king,³ and that his brother-in-law, John Clopton, mentions "my brothyr Denston" in a letter written, *c.* 1454, to John Paston.⁴ This letter was written with reference to a marriage that was being arranged between John Clopton and Elizabeth Paston, John Paston's sister.⁵

Bokenham wrote his legend of St. Katherine for Katherine Denston and another friend of the same name, Katherine Howard.⁶ He says in his prolog to the legend:

relate to John Denston's father. But I believe the father to have been named William, for among the other persons for whom mass was to be celebrated in the Denston chantry we find "William Denston and Margaret his wife."

¹ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1436-1441, p. 523.

² *Ibid.*, 1461-1467, pp. 572, 573.

³ *Ibid.*, 1446-1452, p. 299.

⁴ *Paston Letters*, I, p. 284.

⁵ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 285 f. Katherine Denston, according to *Proceedings*, l. c., was the daughter of William Clopton. As the marriage contract shows that John Clopton's father was William, the identification is pretty certain. But *Proceedings* does not cite authority for its statement about Katherine's parentage. This marriage, however, did not take place.

⁶ I regret that I have been unable to identify with any degree of certainty John and Isabel Hunt, for whom Bokenham wrote the legend of St. Dorothy (*Leg.*, St. Dorothy, ll. 239-246). The name John Hunt occurs in a number of Suffolk records, but no satisfactory identification can be established until we find a John Hunt whose wife was named Isabel, for the name is a common one.

Compendyously of al I wyl declare
 No more but only þe passyoun [i. e. of St. Katherine],
 Of Kateryne Howard to gostly consolacyoun,
 And to conforte eek of Denston Kateryne,
 If grace my wyt wyl illumyne.¹

And at the end he prays to the virgin saint:

Also, lady, for þi Katerynys two:
 Howard, & Denston, I besече also,
 For whos goostly counfort & consolacyoun
 Of þi legend þis short translacyour
 I maad in englyssh in dayis fyue.²

Katherine Howard may with great probability be identified as the wife of John Howard of Stoke Neyland, sixteen miles southeast of Stoke Clare, who in 1483 became Duke of Norfolk.³ His son and grandson were patrons of letters,⁴ and his great-grandson was the poet, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. John Howard was himself something of a bookman, for his account with "Thomas Lympnour of Bury," for illuminating, amounts to the large sum of 100s. 2d.,⁵ but he is not known to have been a patron of literature in the strict sense of the word.

¹ *Leg.*, St. Katherine, ll. 52 ff.

² *Ibid.*, 1052 ff. The legend is more than 1000 lines in length.

³ *D. N. B.*, xxviii, pp. 42, 43. She was, according to *Complete Peerage*, vi, p. 47, Katherine, daughter of Sir William de Moleyns of Stoke Pogis, and was married to Howard about 1442. She died in 1465 (*Paston Letters*, iii, p. 486). It is barely possible that it was her husband who received with Broughton the licence to found the Denston chantry. I believe, however, that he was a different person, for the John Howard named in the licence appears to have been unmarried. I infer this from the fact that his wife is not named among the persons for whom mass was to be celebrated in the chantry.

⁴ See, for a summary statement, Ten Brink, *History of English Literature*, iii, p. 237, and, for details and references, Warton, *History of English Poetry*, ed. Hazlitt, iii, pp. 124, 195, 201, iv, pp. 40, 72, and Skelton, *Garlande of Laurell*.

⁵ *Paston Letters*, ii, p. 336.

Bokenham concludes his prolog to the legend of St. Elizabeth of Hungary with the prayer:

Now, blyssyd Elyzabeth, for þi cherytabylnesse
 Helpe us alle to comyn to þat blysful place
 Where þou art in ioye wych neuer shal lesse
 And euere beholdyst god in hys glorious face;
 And syngulerly helpe, þorgh þi specyal grace,
 I the beseche, to dwelle wyth the there
 Aftyr þis outlaury dame Elyzabeth Vere. Amen.¹

And he invokes the saint at the end of the legend itself as follows:

And fynally, lady, to þe trew entent
 Of hyr attende wych specyally
 Thy lyf to make me yaf comaundement
 And þe in hert louyth ful affecteuosly,
 In [sic] mene dame Elyzabeth Ver, sothly;
 A chartyr hyr purchase here of pardoun,
 And whan she shal passyn from þis owtlaury,
 Of god hyr brynge to þe contemplacyoun.
 Amen, mercy, Jhesu, & gramercy.²

This lady was Elizabeth de Vere, Countess of Oxford, wife of the twelfth Earl of Oxford.³ She was a near kinswoman of John Howard of Stoke Neyland, and we find among the Paston letters three written by her to her "entierly welbeloved John Paston."⁴ Other letters in the same collection are addressed by her husband, John

¹ *Leg.*, St. Elizabeth, ll. 76 ff.

² *Ibid.*, 1155 ff.

³ See *Leg.*, St. Mary Magdalene, ll. 69 ff., quoted below, and *D. N. B.*, LVIII, p. 240.

⁴ John Howard of Wigenhall (d. 1435) was grandfather by his first wife of Elizabeth Howard who married the Earl of Oxford, and grandfather by his second wife of John Howard of Stoke Neyland (*Complete Peerage*, VI, pp. 253, 254). For her letters see *Paston Letters*, I, pp. 261-263; I quote the superscription of the third of them.

I newly had begunne to ryme 70
 At request of hyr to whom sey nay
 I nethyr kan ne wyl ne may—
 So mych am I boundon to hyr goodnesse—
 I mene of Oxenforthe þe countesse,
 Dame Elyzabeth Ver by hyr ryht name— 75

 And whyl (we) were besy in þis talkyng,
 My lady hyr hooly & blyssyd purpoos
 To me þis-wyse þer dede oncloos:
 “I haue, quod she, of pure affeccoun 85
 Ful longe tym had a synguler deuocoun
 To þat holy wumman wych, as I gesse,
 Is clepyd of apostyls þe apostyllesse:
 Blyssyd Mary Mawdelyn y mene,
 Whom Cryste from syn made pure & clene, 90
 As þe clerkys seyn, ful mercyfully;
 Whos lyf in englysshe I desyre sothly
 To han maad, & for my sake
 If ye lykyd, þe labour to take,
 & for reuerence of hyr, I wold you preye.” 95
 At wych wurde, what I myht seye,
 I stood in doute; for on þe to part
 My lytyl experyence in rymys [sic] art,
 My labyll mynde & þe dulnesse
 Of my wyt & þe greth rudnesse 100
 I wele remembryd, & on þe toþir partye
 I thowt how hard it is to denye
 A statys preyer, wych, aftyr þe entent
 Of þe poete, is a myhty comaundement.
 Wherefore me thoht, as in þis caas, 105
 That my wyt wer lakkyd bettyr it was,
 Than my wyl; & þefore to do
 My ladyis preyere I assentyd to,
 Of my sympyl cunning aftyr þe myht,
 Vp condycoun þat she me wolde respyt 110
 Of hir ientylnesse tyl I acomplysyd
 My pylgramage hade, wych promysyd
 I to seynt Jamys wyth hert entere
 Had to performe þe same yere,

 And whan my lady herd had myn entent,
 Ful ientyllly þer-to she dede assent,
 Aftyr my desyr, &, sothly to seyn,

She me pardonyd tyl I come ageyn	130
From seynt Jamys, yf god wold so.—	
And I now haue performyd & do	
Aftr myn entent myn pylgrimage:	
Applyn I wyl al þe corage	
Of my wyt & of my kunnyng	135
To performen wyth-out taryng	
My ladyis wyl & hir comaundement. ¹	

Here we have a concrete illustration of the way in which literary production was stimulated in a community such as that which is the subject of the present study; it was her knowledge of the work Bokenham had done for other persons that led Lady Bouchier to ask the poet to undertake a literary commission for her own benefit.

Lady Isabel Bouchier, Countess of Eu, was the wife of Henry Bouchier, later Earl of Essex, and was the sister of the great Duke of York, father of the future Edward IV.² It was for her son that Lydgate's friend and fellow poet, Benedict Burgh, made his translation of Cato's distichs in English verse.³ Burgh was about

¹ *Leg.*, St. Mary Magdalene, ll. 24 ff.

² *D. N. B.*, vi, p. 10.

³ Caxton says: "Here begynneth the prologue or prohemye of the booke callid Caton/ whiche booke hath ben translated in to Englysshe by Mayster Benet Burgh/ late Archedeken of Colchestre and hye chanon of saint stephens at westmestre/ which ful craftly hath made it in balade ryal for the erudicion of my lord Bousher/ Sone & heyr at that tyme to my lord the erle of Estsex" (*Blades, Caxton*, p. 278, prolog to *Caton*). Ms. Harleian 271 contains as its second item: "Liber Catonis compositus per Maḡrum Benedyctum Bernham? Vicarium de Maldoun in Essexia" (*Cat. Harl. MSS.*, i, p. 101). The text itself of the translation (or rather amplified paraphrase) gives evidence of having been composed for a youth of rank. For example.

Beholde my maistre this litel trefyde
 Whiche is ful of wit and sapience
 Enforce the this matere tacomplise
 Thenke hit is translated at your reuerence

that time rector of Sandon and vicar of Maldon, Essex, having been presented to the former living by Thomas, Lord Scales, whose daughter married Henry, the second son of Henry and Isabel Bouchier.¹ We find among the Paston letters ten addressed by Lord Scales to John Paston, in one of which he refers to "my cousyn Sir Miles [Stapleton]." ² On 20 May, 1451, Henry, Viscount Bouchier, received a commission of oyer and terminer

Enrolle hit therefore in your aduertence
 And desire for to knowe what cathon mente
 Whan ye it rede let not your hert be thense
 But doth as this saith with al your hole entente
Parvus Cato, Magnus Cato, [Facsimile of Caxton's
 ed.] Camb., 1906, fol. 3, recto.

and:

Whois preceptis to obserue yf that ye liste
 And to his conseil your hertis to encline
 Right in your age ful wele It shal be wiste
Ibid., fol. 11, recto and verso.

Steele (*Secrees of Old Philosophers*, p. xvii) and Hunt (*D. N. B.*, VII, p. 315) say (the latter with a "probably") that Burgh was tutor to Bouchier's son, but they offer no authority for their statement. All we know of Burgh's *Cato* seems to be contained in Caxton's allusion, the ms. note quoted above, and the few allusions in the work itself. These do not suffice for dating the translation with any accuracy. Warton placed it "about the year 1480, or rather before" (*History of English Poetry*, I, 1778, II, p. 165), and Hazlitt "about the year 1470" (*ibid.*, ed Hazlitt, III, p. 133). The true date, however, is probably much nearer 1440 than 1470, for at the latter date the son and heir of Henry Bouchier had left far behind him the age at which Burgh could have addressed to him the stanzas quoted above, as we may see from Bokenham's allusion to Lady Bouchier's four sons. It is practically certain that Burgh wrote for her eldest son, William, for, tho he did not survive his father, William Bouchier lived to maturity, leaving a son, Henry, who became the second Earl of Essex (*D. N. B.*, VI, p. 11).

¹ Steele, *op. cit.*, p. xvii; he was presented to the living 6 July, 1440. For the marriage, see *D. N. B.*, I, p. 396.

² *Paston Letters*, letters 83-87, 89, 90, 205, 292, 293; *ibid.*, I, p. 120.

in the county of Suffolk, along with John Denston, the Earl of Oxford, and other persons.¹

In his prolog to the life of St. Agatha (or Agas, to use the poet's own form of the name), Bokenham asks for a blessing upon all who honour the holy martyr

& specyally
 To Agas Fleg attende, o blyssyd lady,
 And hyr to purchase help swych grace:
 Owt of þis werd or she do pace,
 That she may haue deu contrycyoun
 Of alle hyre mys & plener confessyoun,
 Space & leyser a-seeth to make
 And þe holy sacrament to take
 Of Crystys body & wyt so holy entente,
 That þe deuyl wyt noon enpechemente
 Hyre mow lette from þe souereyn blys,
 Where ioye & merthe endlees ys:
 Whedyr mot brynge both hyr & us
 Thorgh thy merytyis oure lord Jhesus! ²

I believe Bokenham's patroness to be the Agatha Flegge who appears as the wife of John Flegge in the following document, which (altho dated 1461) has to do with a grant of land made originally in 1446:

Inspecimus and confirmation of letters patent of the king's father Richard, Duke of York, dated at Beaudeley Manor [co. Worcester], 15 October, 25 Henry VI [1446], confirming a grant by William Alnewyk, bishop of Lincoln, John, viscount Beaumont, Ralph, lord Cromwell, knight, Ralph Boteller, knight, lord of Sudeley, Walter, lord Hungerford, knight, *John Fastolf, knight*,³ Nicholas Dixon, clerk, and Robert Darcy, esquire, dated October 1, 25 Henry VI, to *John Flegge, esquire, and Agatha his wife, Thomas, lord Scales, William Bouchier, knight*,³ William Oldehalle, knight, Edmund Mulso, knight, John Barre, knight and *Benedict Burgh, clerk*,³ of

¹ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1446-1452, p. 477.

² *Leg.*, St. Agatha, ll. 55 ff.

³ *Italics mine.*

the manors of Norfambrigge and Lacheleyhalle *alias* Lacheleyheye, co. Essex for the lives of John and Agatha.¹

The name Agatha Flegge is certainly not of the commonest; the date of the grant and the location of the manors (Lacheley-hall is about twelve miles from Stoke Clare) favour the identification, and I think it may be regarded as a highly probable one. If the identification be accepted as correct, the document quoted above furnishes, in its collocation of names, additional evidence of the solidarity of the bookish people of Norfolk and Suffolk.

The legends we have been considering were not Bokenham's only literary work, for he was the author of another series of legends, now apparently lost, of which he tells us in the introduction to his *Mappula Anglie*. The purpose of this work is best explained in Bokenham's own words:

For as moche as in the englische boke the whiche y haue compiled of legenda aurea and of oþer famous legendés at the instaunce of my specielle frendis and for edificacioun and comfort of alle tho þe whiche shuld redene hit or here hit, is oftene-tyme in lyvis of seyntis, Of seynt Cedde, seynt Felix, seynt Edwarde, seynt Oswald and many oþer seyntis of Englund, menciyoun made of dyuers partis, plagis, regnis & contreis of this lande Englonde, þe webe, but if þey be declared, byne fulle hard to knowene: / Therefore, for þe more clerere vndirstandyng of the seid thyngis and othur, y haue drawe owt in to englische XV chapturs þe whiche Arnulphus Cistrenss in his policronica of this landis descripcioun writethe in the last ende of his furst boke; the weh welle knowene & cowde, hit shalle byne

¹ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1461-1467, pp. 44, 45.. Norfambridge, or Fambridge North, is 6½ m. S. of Maldon, Essex, and Lacheley-hall is in the parish of Lindsell, Essex, which is 5 m. NNE. of Dunmow. The estates of Henry Bouchier were most numerous in Essex, but he had at least 8 estates in Suffolk (*Calendarium Inquisitionum Post Mortem*, iv, p. 415). John de Vere's son, also named John de Vere, had at least 8 estates in Suffolk, and many more in Essex (*ibid.*, p. 370).

easy ynoughe to vnderstande alle bat is towched þer-of in the seyd legende.¹

We have here another illustration of the incentive to new literary production that was felt by a writer who lived in a community such as that in which Bokenham resided. It is to be regretted that we have not those other legends, for, whatever might be their literary merit, it would certainly be worth while to know who were the "specielle frendis" for whom they were written.

Osbern Bokenham was not the only poet at Stoke Clare. In the British Museum is a manuscript, Add. 11814, acquired in 1841 from J. S. Fitch of Ipswich, containing a translation of part of Claudian's *De Consulatu Stilichonis*, addressed to Richard, Duke of York, father of Edward IV. At the end of the translation is the note: "Translat & wrete at Clar'. 1445. / Deo gracias."² The manuscript is adorned with the badges of the house of York, and, says Professor Flügel, "trägt den charakter eines dedikationsexemplares, und zwar, wie inhalt, vorwort und eine marginalglosse ausser zweifel setzt, eines dedikationsexemplares, welches für Richard, herzog von York bestimmt war, dessen stellung zu dem schwachen

¹ *Englische Studien*, x, p. 6.

² *Anglia*, xxviii, p. 297. There is a Clare in Oxfordshire, as well as in Suffolk, but there can be little doubt that this ms. was written in the latter country, for the Duke of York was the Lord of Clare in Suffolk and had (as will be shown later) many local connections with that county. The fact that the Austin friary at Stoke Clare has been founded by a Lord of Clare (see Tanner, *Notitia Monastica*, *sub loco*, and *Dialogue* referred to below) makes it highly probable, if not practically certain, that the Claudian translation was made in the house of which Bokenham was a brother. Bokenham's connections with the Duke's family and the connection the *Dialogue* establishes between the friary and the Duke of York are also strong evidence.

könig, Heinrich VI, gerade durch diese handschrift eine wichtige historische erklärung findet." ¹ At the beginning

"The auctour spekith to this tretése," as follows:

Prey god entierly to be thi goode guyde
 Thou tretése voide of lusty eloquence
 That the high prince sett not ferre aside
 Nobil doctryne thurgh thyn imprudence
 Which of al Engelande is namyd the defence
 In loonge labourys. ful like to stilico
 Assemblabil in rest. god graunte h[i]m be also

Shew the to his highnes. for this oon entente
 That be thi remembraunce. vertue moote him please
 Aftir whom grace folowith. soon from heven sent
 Which in loonge tymes. makith right sure ease.
 Othir rest is veyne. not cowntid at oo peese.
 As folkis life expressith. which peynes may not fle
 ffor al richessis and estatis. of worldely dignyte

Marke stilicoes life. whom peoplis preyed
 with what labouris. of the regions wide
 And Rome hir selfe. the consulat he vpreised
 ffor now the parlement pierys. wher' thei goo or ryde
 Seyen the duke of yorke hath god vpon his side
 Amen. amen. blissed Ihesu make this rumour' trewe
 And aftir feele peryles. this prince with Ioie endewe.²

Following the translation is an epilog, of which the last lines are:

My lorde off yorke most tendurly graunt good ihesu thys
 Preeude in hys herte. 'how euyr honor merces est virtutis.
 Amen.³

Professor Flügel suggests that Bokenham may be the author of this work,⁴ but the conjecture, tho a natural

¹ *Anglia*, xxviii, p. 422. I correct the obvious misprint, iv for vi.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 255, 256.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 432.

one, has in its favour only the assumption that a religious house will not have among its members more than a single poet at a given period. The terms in which Bokenham speaks of the Duke of York, tho complimentary, show nothing of the strong partisanship of the Claudian translator, altho Bokenham was writing in the same year, 1445.¹ On the basis of our present knowledge we can only say that while Bokenham *may* have been the author of the translation, such evidence as we have is rather against than for his authorship.

It is possible that the translator of Claudian (if he be not Bokenham) ² wrote also the work bearing the following title:

This Dialogue betwix a Seculer asking and a Frere answeyng at the grave of Dame Johan of Acres shewith the lyneal descent of the lordis of the honoure of Clare, fro the tyme of the fundation of the Freeris in the same honoure the yere of our Lorde MCCXLVIII, unto the first day of May the yere MCCC[C]LVI.³

There can be little doubt that this work, consisting of about one hundred Latin hexameters and an English translation, was composed and translated in the Austin friary founded by the family it commemorates. It gives about a third of its length to Richard, Duke of York, naming

¹ For Bokenham's reference to the Duke of York see his legend of St. Mary Magdalene, ll. 27 ff.

² The *Dialogue* cannot be Bokenham's work if Horstmann is right in his inference (see above) that Bokenham died before 1447. In the absence of other evidence the inference is a sound one but is of course not conclusive. I do not wish to be understood as *denying* Bokenham's authorship of either the Claudian translation or the *Dialogue*.

³ *Leg.*, p. 269. The date is MCCCXVI in the text but, as Horstmann observes, it is clear from the lines that follow that a C has been dropped by a scribe or editor. Horstmann prints the text from Dugdale's *Monasticon Anglicanum*, and the ms. from which Dugdale derived it is not known to exist.

his children individually and concluding with the following prayer for the Duke and his family:

Longe mote he liven to Goddis plesaunce,
 This high and mighty Prince in prosperite;
 With virtue and victorie God him avaunce
 Of al his enemyes, and grante that he
 And the noble Princesse, his wife, may see
 Her childres children, or thei hens wende,
 And aftir this outelary the joy that nevyr shal end!¹

We know from Hoccleve's poem, recalling the fact that the Duke had once asked him in London to send him all the balades he had,² that Richard, like his son Edward, was fond of literature, and we may infer from the continuance of these poetical tributes from Stoke Clare that they were not unfavourably received. Like the Duke of Suffolk, Richard of York must have resided chiefly at court, but he was identified also to a considerable extent with the county of Suffolk, and we find him granting in 1447 to the friars near Bury St. Edmund's twenty acres of land situated in their vicinity.³ It is interesting to note among the witnesses of this grant the name of Bokenham's patron, John Denston. The Duke of York served almost continuously on the commissions of the peace for Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex between 1433 and 1452, and had as colleagues, at various times, most of the persons who have been dealt with in the present study—William Paston, John Paston, Sir John Fastolf, Sir

¹ *Leg.*, p. 274.

² Hoccleve's *Works*, I, *Minor Poems*, ed. Furnivall, EETS., p. 48, ll. 10 ff. The balade is addressed to the Duke of York.

³ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1446-1452, p. 231. The Duke of York had at least 14 estates in Suffolk (*Calendarium Inquisitionum Post Mortem*, IV, p. 320).

Miles Stapleton, William de la Pole, John de Vere, Henry Bourchier, and Thomas, Lord Scales.¹

We learn from the prolog to Bokenham's legend of St. Katherine that he knew the work of John Capgrave, prior of the house of Austin friars at Lynne, Norfolk,² and it is highly probable that the two writers were acquainted personally. Capgrave's chief patrons were of the court—Henry VI, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, and Edward IV—but he was not exclusively a court writer. His metrical life of St. Norbert was written, as he tells us, for John Wignale, abbot of the Premonstratensian monastery at West Dereham, about three miles southeast of Downham Market, Norfolk. The concluding stanzas are as follows:

Go litel book, to hem þat wil ye rede
 Sey you were made to þe abbot of Derham:
 Fast be Stoke it stant, witȝouten drede;
 It is to lordes and gentyls all in sam,
 And eke to for men a very Iulianes ham.
 The abbotes name was called at þat tyde,
 The good Ion Wygnale, þat neuer wold him hide

ffor no gestis, but rather he wold hem seke.
 The freris name þat translate þis story
 Thei called Ion Capgraue, wech in assumpcion weke
 Made a ende of all his rymyng cry,
 The ȝer of Crist our Lord, witȝouten ly,
 A thousand four hundred & fourty euene.
 After þis lyf I pray God send us heuene.³

¹ *Calendar of the Patent Rolls*, 1429-1436, pp. 616, 621, 625; 1436-1441, pp. 582, 586, 590, 591; 1441-1446, pp. 470, 474, 478, 479; 1446-1452, pp. 589, 592, 595. These commissions also furnish additional evidence of connection between the Norfolk group of patrons and the Earl of Oxford and Henry Bourchier.

² See *Leg.*, St. Katharine, ll. 43 ff. The date at which Capgrave became prior is not (so far as I am aware) known.

³ Capgrave's *Lives of St. Augustine*, etc., ed. J. J. Munro, EETS., p. xiii.

This is the only work of Capgrave's that we know him to have written for a Norfolk patron, but the gentlewoman for whom he made his life of St. Augustine may very well have been of that county. Unfortunately this cannot be proved, for all that the author tells us of the occasion of his work is in a few sentences at the beginning and end. In the prolog he says:

The cause of bis writyng which meued me moost now will I telle. A noble creatur, a gentill woman, desired of me with ful grete instauns to write on-to hir, þat is to sey, to translate hir treuly oute of Latyn, þe lif of Seynt Augustyn, grete doctour of þe cherch. Sche desired þis þing of me iather þan of a-noþer man be-cause þat I am of his profession, for sche supposed veryly þat I wold do it with þe bettir wil. Sche desired eke þis lif of þis Seynt more þan of any opir for sche was browt forth in-to þis world in his solempne feste. Than wil I, in þe name of our Lord Ihesu, beginne þis werk, to þe worchip of bis glorious doctour, and to þe plesauns and consolation of þis gentil woman þat hath so willed me with sundry [r]etribucione[s] þat I coude not disobeye hir desir.¹

And at the end:

Thus endith . . [etc.] . . And as I hope, ȝe gentyl woman, ȝe schuld plesse wel þis Seint if ȝe wold se his place onys in a ȝer, and þouȝ ȝe left a day in heruest of ȝour labour, he coude make retribution in oþer party.²

These references indicate that the recipient of the work was a person of considerable importance, but a resident of the country rather than of the court. If St. Augustine's "place" was the house of the Austin friars at Lynne, which is a natural interpretation of the phrase, she must have been a resident of the county, or of an adjoining one. Moreover, she was a person to whom Capgrave was under obligations. For, in spite of Capgrave's speaking of her desire that he should translate St. Augustine's life

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

for her from the Latin, it appears that the work is actually Capgrave's own composition, compiled out of St. Augustine's *Confessions*, *Sermons*, and other works,¹ and must therefore have required for its execution much more time than a mere translation would have done.

These circumstances make one think of Capgrave's friendship and regard for the family of Beaumont, to which he alludes in the following passage of his life of Henry Beaumont in his work *De Illustribus Henricis*:

Haec sunt quae de hujus Henrici gestis utrimque invenire potui. Ceterum utrum hereditatem suam tunc acquisierint in parte, sive in toto hi venerabiles viri, mihi adhuc incognitum est; sed nec ad hoc opus multum [pertinere] noscitur, quippe cum memoriam Henricorum Illustrium solam commemorandam suscepì, et maxime horum de Bellomonte nomina conscribenda delectaret, cum servus eorum existam, et speciali affectione huic generationi alligatus sim.²

From a passage in his *Life of St. Gilbert* it appears that it was Sir John Beaumont who was Capgrave's friend:

This man [*i. e.*, St. Gilbert] was bore in þat same place cleped Sempingham. His fader was bore in Normandy, his modyr lady of þis place be-for seide. His fader, as þei sey, was a knyte of Normannye which cam in-to þis lond with Kyng William at þe Conquest and weddyd þe lady of þis place, so þat þe heritage Seint Gilbert was very eyer of þis possession & of many othir. That þis is likly to be soth, I a-legege a testimonie which I haue be informacion of my Lord Beaumound, Ion, þat now lyuyth. He seide þat his kynrod cam first out of Frauns with þis same Kyng William, and on of hem, a notable knyte, weddid þe lady of Folkingham at þat tyme, and so of her issewe cam all þe Beaumoundis þat haue be sithe.³

¹ For the evidence, see *ibid.*, pp. vii, viii.

² Capgrave, *De Illustribus Henricis*, ed. Hingeston, Rolls Series, pp. 168, 169. I owe the reference to Furnivall: Capgrave's *St. Katherine*, ed. Horstmann, EETS., pp. xxxii, xxxiii.

³ Munro, *op. cit.*, pp. 62, 63. This part of the *De Illustribus Henricis* was written between 1446 and 1453 (Hingeston, p. xlix); the *St. Augustine* was written before 1451 and the *St. Gilbert* was written in 1451 (Munro, p. vii).

The Beaumonts, as the reference to Folkingham (*i. e.*, Falkingham, Lincolnshire) shows, were originally a Lincolnshire family,¹ but this Sir John Beaumont married Elizabeth, daughter and heir of Sir William Phelip, called Lord Bardolf, of Dennington, Suffolk, and Erpingham, Norfolk.² By this marriage the Beaumonts became possessed of great estates in both Norfolk and Suffolk. The Norfolk estates were chiefly in the neighborhood of Downham Market, East Dereham, Aylsham, and Norwich; the Suffolk estates were in the vicinity of Bungay, Framlingham (six or seven miles west of Saxmundham), and Ipswich.³ Thus the family became closely identified with most of the East Anglian families who are the subject of the present paper. By his marriage with Elizabeth Phelip, Sir John Beaumont was connected with Sir Miles Stapleton, whose mother was Cecilia, daughter of William, Lord Bardolf.⁴ He was one of the grantors of the charter, quoted above, by which John and Agatha Flegge were beneficiaries, and we find among the *Paston Letters* a number addressed to him.⁵ Thus, altho we are not able to say that Sir John Beaumont was a patron of letters, we know that he was in some way a benefactor to Capgrave, and that he was intimately associated with the persons whom

¹ See the list of the estates owned by the family before Sir John's marriage to Elizabeth Phelip, Dugdale, *Baronage of England*, II, pp. 50 ff. There are no estates in Norfolk or Suffolk in the list. For the family history, see *ibid.* and *Complete Peerage*, I, pp. 284 ff. and Corrigenda, vol. VIII.

² *Complete Peerage*, I, p. 242.

³ For the estates of which William Beaumont, son of Capgrave's Sir John (or Viscount Beaumont) was seized in 1461, see Dugdale, II, p. 54.

⁴ Bloomfield, *Norfolk*, IX, pp. 320, 324.

⁵ Letters 49, 52, 60, 75, 310, 329, 330, 961. The writers of these letters, however, are not persons dealt with in the present paper.

we know to have been fostering the production of literature in Norfolk and Suffolk during this period.

The *Promptorium Parvulorum* cannot be called literature, but it is at least worthy of mention that this early example of English lexicography was compiled at Lynne, in the house of the Dominican friars, and that its author was a contemporary of John Lydgate, Steven Scrope, William Worcester, John Methan, Capgrave, Bokenham, and the anonymous writer at Stoke Clare. He tells us that he undertook the work "iuuenum clericorum gramatizare volentium misertus," that it was composed in the year 1440,¹ and that he is a Norfolk man, using the dialect of East Anglia—

Comitatus tamen norfolchie loquendi modum sum solum secutus, quem solum ab infancia didici, et solo tenus plenius perfec[t]iusque cognoul.²

With this work we may close our survey of the literary history of East Anglia circa 1450.³ We have seen that the amount of literature produced there was very considerable, that many of the nobility and gentry of Norfolk and

¹*Promptorium Parvulorum*, ed. Mayhew, EETS., col. 1.

²*Ibid.*, col. 3. Cf. also, "Explicit preambulum in librum predictum, secundum vulgarem modum loquendi orientalium anglorum" (*ibid.*).

³Juliana of Norwich probably wrote her *Revelations of Divine Love* previous to 1400, and almost certainly at a date considerably anterior to the period we have been considering (see Grace Warrack's introduction to her edition of the work L. 1901, pp. xi-xix). Two Latin poets, John Seguard and Thomas Langley, of Norwich and Hulm respectively, are said by Warton to have written about 1413 and 1430 (*History of English Poetry*, ed. Hazlitt, III, p. 125) but I have no other information about them. The writings of Robert Finingham, a Franciscan of Norwich who is said to have died about 1460, appear to deal exclusively with the defence of the Franciscans against the attacks of their opponents and matters of the canon law (*D. N. B.*, XIX, p. 27).

Suffolk were encouraging the writing of books, and that these persons were not isolated from each other, but closely connected by ties of kinship, neighborhood, marriage, or interest.¹

It is natural for us to ask, what effect had this group of East Anglian patrons upon the general literary history of England in the fifteenth century? There can be little doubt that the existence of such a group, and particularly its solidarity, was a notable stimulus to the local production of literature. Beyond this, however, these patrons appear to have exerted no influence whatever. The literature produced under their auspices scarcely rises above mediocrity, has no special character of its own, and originates no new literary type. Nevertheless, the existence of such a literary group, quite apart from the court, has its interest. That East Anglia originated no new type of literature at this period is due to the unoriginal character of its poets, not to the absence of circumstances favorable to the development and perpetuation of a new type. If one of these poets had originated a new type of literature that caught the fancy of his patron, there is every reason to believe that the type would have achieved popularity and have been perpetuated. For these patrons were numerous enough, and influential enough, to make successful a literary innovation. It is obvious, therefore, that the same conditions as those we have been considering might, in another case, produce important results.

¹ I do not wish to be understood as implying that the relations of these persons with each other were always those of a friendly nature. They were often of decidedly the reverse character, as every reader of the *Paston Letters* knows. But unfriendly relations among some of the persons inclined to the patronage of literature may have proved as favourable to literary production as the most friendly relations could have been.

One of the most remarkable episodes in early English literary history is the revival of alliterative poetry. After remaining for more than a hundred years so completely out of fashion that we have not a single piece of alliterative verse that we can date between 1250 and 1350, it suddenly springs up and achieves an extraordinary vogue. We have *Winner and Waster* about 1350,¹ *Joseph of Arimathea* and *William of Palerne* between 1350 and 1360,² the A-Text of the *Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman* shortly after 15 January, 1362,³ *Patience* and *Cleanness* (say) between 1370 and 1380,⁴ and *Richard the Redeless* in 1399,⁵ to mention only the earliest dateable works. And the noteworthy fact is that this vogue was not achieved thru the patronage of the court, that alliterative verse was recognized as being a literary genre that was foreign to the south of England,⁶ and that

¹ Gollancz accepts 1347-8 as the most probable date (*Parlement of the Thre Ages*, pp. xiii, xiv. It is clear at any rate from the allusions he points out that the poem cannot have been written long after 1350.

² Skeat, *Joseph of Arimathea*, EETS., p. x. A date considerably earlier than 1400 is assured by the fact that the poem is found in the Vernon MS. The date of *William of Palerne* is fixed by the fact that it was written for Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford, who died in 1361. (Skeat, *William of Palerne*, EETS., pp. ix-xi, *D. N. B.*, v, p. 310).

³ Skeat, *Piers the Plowman*, II, pp. ix, x (Parallel Text, Oxford, 1886).

⁴ The handwriting of the MS., says Gollancz, "belongs on the best authority to the latter years of the fourteenth century" (*Pearl*, p. xxi).

⁵ Skeat, *Piers the Plowman*, II, pp. lxxxiii, lxxxiv. *Piers the Plowman's Creed* is dated by Skeat (see his edition, Oxford, 1906, p. xx) about 1393, but there is no satisfactory evidence as to the locality in which it was composed.

⁶ I refer, of course, to the well known passage in the Parson's prolog; this passage should be compared with *Winner and Waster*, ll. 7, 8, quoted in the next note.

all the poems I have named were written in the west or northwest of England, in a dialect remote from that of the court.¹ How was it that this new kind of poetry acquired a popularity that lasted thru the fifteenth century and spread even to Scotland? Is it not worth while to give serious consideration to the hypothesis² that there existed in the West Midland in the second half of the fourteenth century a group of patrons similar to that which we have found in East Anglia in the middle of the fifteenth? Would not a new type of poetry have an

¹ *Winner and Waster* is localised in the west by the lines:

Dare neuer no westren wy while this werlde lasteth
Send his sone south-warde to see ne to here (ll. 7, 8).

and

Bot I schall tell yow a tale þat me by-tyde ones
Als I went in the weste wandrynge myn one (ll. 31, 32).

William of Palerne is localized in the west by its connection with Humphrey de Bohun, whom the poet himself (l. 166) connects with Gloucester. The A-Text of *Piers the Plowman* has, in spite of its allusions to other localities, a very real connection with the west of England by virtue of its allusions to the Malvern Hills. *Richard the Redeless* is shown to be connected with the west by the opening lines:

And as I passid in my preiere ther prestis were at messe
In a blessid borugh that Bristow is named.

And *Joseph of Arimathea*, *Patience*, and *Cleanness* are shown by their dialect to have been written in the West Midland.

² There is of course no novelty in this hypothesis. Ten Brink said, for example, "Trevisa undertook the translation of this work [*Polychronicon*] under the auspices of Lord Berkeley, who occupies a similar position in the inauguration of English secular prose as do other members of the nobility of West-England in the revival of alliterative poetry" (*History of English Literature*, II, p. 82). I regret that I am unable to offer any corroborating evidence of the existence of such a group of patrons in the West Midland. But in the very nature of the case not much can be expected in the way of corroboration, for when the poets themselves are unknown it is not strange that we should be in ignorance as to the patrons for whom they wrote.

enormously greater chance of establishing itself if inaugurated under such conditions, than if it were created in a locality where the immediate success of the poet depended upon the approval of a single patron, and where there were no other patrons who might promote the writing of other works in the new style?

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